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MARCH WEATHER CONDITIONS

A radio talk by J. B. Kincer, Weather Bureau, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period, National Farm and Home Hour Wednesday, April 11, 1934.

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How do you do folks?

Well the weather maps during the past few days have very definitely said that spring is in the air. However, we are scheduled today to talk with you a few minutes about conditions in general since our last visit about a month ago and this will take us back into chilly March, which was persistently cool in the eastern United States, but continuously warm in the western half. The temperature for March, as a whole, averaged below normal throughout the South and from the Ohio Valley northward and eastward. From the Plains States westward the month was warm, especially so west of the Rocky Mountains. Throughout the Great Basin and most Pacific districts the temperature averages 8° to 12° higher than normal; this made the third successive month with abnormal warmth over the western United States.

Freezing weather extended in March as far south as northern Florida and the east Gulf districts, but did not reach the coast from Louisiana westward.

Precipitation was generally above normal in the Atlantic area and in most of the South. Parts of the Southeast had less than normal, but west Gulf sections received much more than usually occurs in this month. From the Ohio and lower Missouri Valleys, and southern plains northward, the monthly totals of precipitation were mostly deficient, though locally more than normal occurred. From Montana westward the amounts were generous, but a large area of the far Southwest, centering in Southern California, had very little precipitation, ranging from inappreciable amounts to only about half the normal. Snowfall was comparatively heavy in northern and central States east of the Rocky Mountains; snow occurred well into the southern States, some being reported from as far south as Vicksburg, Miss., and a little more than 4 inches at Atlanta, Ga. March, generally speaking, was rather unfavorable for agricultural operations in the eastern part of the country, but generally favorable in the west. The East was too cool and large areas had too much rain, but the West was mostly sunny and warm.

However, since the first of April conditions in the Eastern and Northern States have improved wonderfully. The reaction to warmer weather during the past week with considerable sunshine, made decidedly favorable weather for all agricultural interests. Farm work is now progressing well, except for some retardation by continued wet soil in the middle Atlantic area. In the East some gardening has been done as far north as Pennsylvania, while the general warmth, and favorable moisture situation stimulated rapid development in all vegetation. Growth is now in evidence as far north as New York, and some plowing has been accomplished to southern New England. In this eastern area the condition of the soil is favorable for germination of spring crops and for growth, except locally in the upper Ohio Valley and the extreme southeast where more rain is needed.

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It has been favorable also in the area between the Mississippi River and Rocky mountains, except that wet soil retarded work in Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Oklahoma. In the central States of this area, comprising Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, and Nebraska, recent precipitation has been decidedly helpful, and the outlook is improved materially. The Dakotas and Minnesota have been benefited by additional moisture; the top soil is in fairly good shape in South Dakota and Minnesota, but North Dakota is still badly in need of rain in all sections. Montana and the Rocky Mountain States are at present unusually good shape, with all vegetation far in advance of an average season. In the Pacific area rain is needed in the South, especially in central and southern California.

Much corn ground was prepared for planting during the past week, and some seeding was accomplished in the southern portion of the Corn Belt. In general, this work is getting under way slightly later than in an average year, but not materially so. Planting progressed favorably in North Carolina, while in the central valleys a little corn was put in as far north as extreme southwestern Kentucky. Seeding progressed in eastern and southeastern Kansas. In the Mississippi Valley States the condition of the soil has been markedly improved by recent rains.

Cotton planting is also somewhat behind the average, but this work became rather active during the week in many places, though there was interruption by wet soil in the western part of the belt. Local planting has commenced to the northern portion of Texas, and a little cotton has been seeded in southern Arkansas. In the East planting made excellent progress in southern Georgia, and a little was put in on the coastal plains northward to southern North Carolina near the average date for beginning of planting operations in this area.

Recent weather has been extremely favorable for the winter wheat crop in the Ohio Valley with much improvement noted; condition now ranges from fair to excellent and, in the western part, it is stooling nicely. Rapid growth was noted in Missouri, with condition good to excellent, while wheat greened nicely in Iowa. In Kansas the crop improved noticeable in the eastern two thirds; it now covers the ground, except in parts of the west.

In the spring wheat region, South Dakota was benefited by some additional rain, with the top soil now moist enough for germination, except in the northeast; in North Dakota light showers were helpful, but more rain is still badly needed. In Minnesota the soil is in good condition for field work and some disk ing and dragging have been done, with a little spring wheat seeded. Montana is in good shape, with the seeding of spring grains becoming more general.

In a word, so far as the weather is concerned the first 10 days of April have brought a decided improvement in agricultural conditions on wide fronts.